

How to Slow Down When You Have a Busy Life

There are probably a million thoughts buzzing around your head at any time. What I've done, what I haven't, where I'm behind, things I keep forgetting. At times like these, it's hard to slow down, take a breather and enjoy life. The problem is that constantly being overwhelmed leads to stress, anxiety, depression, and even physical ailments.

You might have the misconception that slowing down means stopping what you're doing, which naturally you can't do because...you're busy. However, I've found a way to slow down while still getting things done.

Be Mindful of Your Actions (Instead of Always Thinking Ahead)

Try being aware of what you're doing while you're doing it. So often, we rush around, creating a state of whirlwind thoughts and moving through life at breakneck speed.

If you're aware of the tasks you're doing, it slows down the brain. I've got a lot to do, but I'm conscious of my fingers moving on the keypad. How my neck is slightly stiff, and I should get up and stretch. That I feel enjoyment and peace writing this article.

You don't have to stop what you are doing, but when you are present in your actions, you naturally feel calmer instead of always looking ahead to the next thing. Become aware of your movement, thoughts, and feelings a few times a day. It takes practice, so leave a note somewhere as a reminder.

Do the Bare Minimum (so You Can Do More)

Have you ever thought, 'Maybe I don't have to achieve everything *right now*? Perhaps I can do what absolutely needs doing and nothing else?' Doing the bare minimum is typically associated with lazy people, but you don't have to be over-achieving and strive to be a perfectionist 24/7.

Sometimes doing as little as possible is productive. Is it necessary to scrub the bathroom until it shines? Or can you cut that time in half? Use your spare time to do a hair mask or have a botanical steam facial.

It can be challenging to cut down on tasks because it gets in your head that you *must* do certain things. However, only doing the essentials is another way of putting your battery in power-saving mode. You can sustain the pace for a lot longer. You are still progressing, but you're not pushing yourself into overdrive.

There will be times when you feel energised and productive. But even in those moments, reserve some of your stamina for days when you need to take it slow. Instead of seeing the bare minimum as lazy, think about it as walking instead of running to maintain energy.

Let Some Things Go (Not Everything is Critical)

Sometimes busy people don't have to be as busy as they think. They *make* themselves busy. Why? They think if they're not busy, then they're slacking. If they haven't been productive, then they've failed. Or they're so uncomfortable with their own company and thoughts that they distract themselves.

If you are rundown and snappy because you're constantly on the go, then take a moment to rethink your priorities. There are always things you have to do, like turn up to work, do the food shop, and pick the kids up from school. But do you *really* have to attend that social event? Must you garden every weekend or study until you're almost asleep? No. Honestly, you don't.

You might think, 'Don't be stupid. Of course, I do!' But do you? Take me, for example. I'm studying for a Master's degree. You could say working toward my degree is essential because if I don't, I'll fail. All that money, all that time, all that ambition, I can't possibly let it go. It's something that *needs* doing, right?

I also want to eat well, get fit, and have a clean, tidy and organised home. The problem is, even though those are healthy habits, it's taking on too much. On top of everything, I'm moving house.

The thing that takes priority is finding a home. The Master's degree has to wait. Education is just education. Yes, it's important, yes, it means a lot, and yes, I worry about it not getting done. But if I don't put it on the back burner, I will become an exhausted mess.

While doing the extras can make you feel better, sometimes letting them go gives you more headspace. If you're feeling swamped, ask yourself, does this *really* need doing? Is it going to harm my way of living if I don't do it right now? It doesn't mean you'll never get around to it. It just means you're prioritising your well-being above everything else.

Cut things out that aren't essential, and let go of anything pushing you over the edge.

Delegate Tasks (Not Just at Work)

Delegation is often associated with work, but it doesn't have to be. Use your support system and technology to help you. Automate bill payments and ask the kids to unstack the dishwasher or empty the bins.

Do alternate pick-ups from school with a friend. Have specific tasks done by particular people. For example, maybe your significant other's role is the food shop, and yours is to

take out the recycling. You can even hire help. There's no shame in it. It's better to live a healthy life (for yourself and everyone around you) rather than thinking you're weak for not doing everything yourself.

Create Boundaries With *Yourself* (and Don't Overstep Them)

So often, people talk about boundaries with others, and that's a good thing. But we often forget that boundaries with ourselves are just, if not *more* important. If you don't know how to say no to yourself, constantly push, and never listen to what you want, isn't that just as bad?

When you overstep your boundaries, you force yourself into doing things you don't want to do. Yes, sometimes you have to do unpleasant things like taking out the rubbish to keep your home smelling fresh. However, if there's no letup, then you're exhibiting toxic behaviour.

Personal boundaries make you feel less busy because you are not constantly pushing yourself, and that creates space to wind down and relax.

You can maintain personal boundaries by telling yourself, 'At this [insert time], I will [insert what you will do]. It might be, 'At 4pm, I will stop all house chores.' Other examples are closing your laptop, taking a bath, or meeting friends at the pub. It's okay to be flexible but ensure you honour what you want and need.

Slowing Down Doesn't Mean Stopping but Changing How You Spend Your Time

It's important to remember that there will be unavoidable busy times in your life. Kids, a family member getting sick, or starting a new business, these things happen, and they can be very stressful.

However, you must take notice if you are *constantly* overworked and overwhelmed. If your mental and physical health deteriorates, it's a clear sign you need to figure out how to put yourself first. The best way to do that is by making time for yourself where there was none before.

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